



March 6, 2012

Assembly Committee Cancels Key Votes on Boards Bill!

- *Assembly Colleges and Universities Committee Cancels Key Votes Just Before This Morning's Scheduled Session.*
- *Votes on AB 353, Disbanding the MATC Milwaukee District Board, Were the Only Scheduled Committee Items Today.*
- *Good News is Tempered By Remaining Possible Paths to Passage.*

As Monday afternoon wore on and most Capitol types were focused on iron mining, technical college advocates from around the state were weighing in before this morning's key votes to move forward AB 353, the district board composition bill. The Assembly bill version was scheduled for a series of votes by the Colleges and Universities Committee this morning.

Just an hour before this morning's scheduled votes, the committee cancelled its executive (voting) session on AB 353. Had the committee met, we expected the bill would first be amended to match the Senate bill version (SB 275) passed in committee there on February 23rd. Those amendments switch the bill's focus from all district boards to only MATC Milwaukee. They would also disband and recreate both the MATC Board itself, and its longstanding appointing authority of 22 school board presidents.

Once amended this morning, the bill was to face a critical vote on whether the committee recommended overall passage. This effectively sends the bill from committee and makes it available for scheduling on the Assembly floor.

The late cancellation of this morning's session suggests that the 11-member committee (7 Republicans and 4 Democrats) did not have sufficient affirmative votes to recommend passage. While a committee delay last week was due to member attendance issues, today is a full floor session day and all members of the Assembly are expected to be present.

This is extremely good news. It reflects great work to tell the story of our boards, how they are appointed, why they are highly representative and accountable, and how they work. Nevertheless, either bill can still pass.

Besides board members and presidents statewide, and the MATC Milwaukee team itself, WTCS President Dan Clancy and the Wisconsin Association of School Boards also expressed opposition with committee members yesterday. A stellar op-ed piece was published in today's Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, [*Senate Bill Hijacks MATC from Milwaukee's Residents*](#), written by MATC Board member Fred Royal, Jr., our District Boards Association Secretary/Treasurer. It ran in tandem with a less positive Journal Sentinel editorial, [*MATC Bill falls short, but change is needed at school*](#).

There are at least two ways AB 353 or SB 275 can become law before the session ends in the next few weeks. First, today's cancellation does not keep the bill from being considered again by the same committee in the coming days. A new meeting can be scheduled with 24 hour notice.

More important, the Senate version, SB 275, has already been voted out of committee and is available for scheduling before the full Senate. It was not among 34 bills on today's Senate calendar. However, most observers believe the Senate will meet at least one more day, and probably two or three, before adjournment. If the Senate bill passes the full Senate, it is sent to the Assembly on the Senate "message." A bill may be taken to the Assembly floor directly from the Senate message. It can then be "concurrent in" by a simple vote. This passes the bill despite the fact it may remain in Assembly Committee without the votes needed to take it to the floor independently in that house.

At this time, the later path (Senate passage concurrent in by the Assembly) is still very possible, both in terms of timing and in terms of a likely push by a Senator and others strongly supporting the bill.

Senate voting will be potentially volatile today (and in the coming days) dominated by attempts to pass a mining bill. The Senate is comprised of 17 Republicans and 16 Democrats and continues to be the subject of intense efforts to pass a high-stakes mining proposal.

We will need to make a case for Senate Republicans to join Democrats in opposing SB 275 on the floor. A revised advocacy document tailored to this purpose will be sent out to you later today or on Wednesday.

Yesterday, a key Capitol insider observed that MATC Milwaukee may be the first of our boards disbanded and reshaped by the Legislature, but certainly not the last. Other legislators and future proposals may await word of how AB 353 and SB 275 fare this session as eagerly as we do. The advocacy points we make are universal concerning the power of our 100-year model of local responsiveness and governance statewide. The passage of AB 353 or SB 275 will hurt all colleges and Wisconsin businesses, students, and communities counting on us from corner to corner of all districts.

Stay tuned and thank you to all who have helped in this crucial effort to date.

This report was prepared by Paul Gabriel for the Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association and any analysis or opinion in the report is the author's.